COLOMBIA–A CASE STUDY IN SMART POWER

A Monograph

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This monograph first examines three kinds of powers that nations might wield on the international stage: hard power, soft power, and smart power. Generally speaking, hard power is military and economic force. Soft power is human diplomacy, development assistance, and cultural attraction. Smart power is a balanced synthesis of the two, an integrated approach that has gained traction in the national security community as a preferred way of engaging in foreign and national security relations. The paper then focuses on the employment of smart power strategy in a single country context, Colombia. The period examined is roughly between 2000 and 2012, the time span corresponding to a major upsurge in U.S. support under *Plan Colombia* and *Plan Colombia's* follow-on programs.

The monograph seeks to answer two questions. First, in the approximate period cited, as Colombia emerged from a near failed state status, to what extent was the United States engagement there an example of smart power? And second, was smart power strategy effective?

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ABSTRACT

COLOMBIA – A CASE STUDY IN SMART POWER, by John P. Brady, Foreign Service Officer, United States Agency for International Development, 49 pages.

This monograph first examines three kinds of powers that nations might wield on the international stage: hard power, soft power, and smart power. Generally speaking, hard power is military and economic force. Soft power is human diplomacy, development assistance, and cultural attraction. Smart power is a balanced synthesis of the two, an integrated approach that has gained traction in the national security community as a preferred way of engaging in foreign and national security relations. The paper then focuses on the employment of smart power strategy in a single country context, Colombia. The period examined is roughly between 1999 and 2010, the time span corresponding to a major upsurge in U.S. support under Plan Colombia and Plan Colombia's follow-on programs.

The monograph seeks to answer two questions. First, in the approximate period cited, as Colombia emerged from near failed state status, to what extent was the United States engagement there an example of smart power? And second, was this smart power strategy effective in Colombia?

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ACRONYMS

ABD   Air Bridge Denial

AUC   United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia

CRS   Congressional Research Service

CSDI   Colombia Strategic Development Initiative

Defense   Department of Defense

ELN   National Liberation Army

FARC   Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

GAO   Government Accountability Office

IDPs   Internally Displaced Persons

OTI   Office of Transition Initiatives

PNC   National Consolidation Plan

State   US Department of State

USAID   US Agency for International Development

WOLA   Washington Office on Latin America

ILLUSTRATIONS

PLAN COLOMBIA AND SMART POWER

What is power? In essence, nothing more than the ability to get others to do what you want. But how? What are these powers and how are they used? And when the subject is power and nations and foreign policy as this paper is, what are the means by which nations can utilize the powers they have?

This paper first considers three forms of power: *hard power, soft power,* and *smart power,* terms coined by Joseph Nye, Harvard University professor and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs in the Clinton Administration. The paper then focuses on the use of smart power in Colombia. The period examined is roughly 1999 to 2010, a time span corresponding to major stepped-up US support for Colombia, first under Plan Colombia, a $7.5 billion six-year foreign assistance plan, and later the Colombia Strategic Development Initiative, a US government follow-on strategy. The monograph seeks to answer the question: in the approximate period cited, as Colombia careened toward collapse in the late 1990s and then began to emerge from near failed-state status in 2002-03, to what degree was the United States' engagement there an exercise in smart power and in what ways was it effective?

To answer that question, the author first describes a smart power framework, borrowing smart power dimensions and tenets that smart power thinkers have previously articulated, and then compares US engagement in Colombia (as well as the Colombian government's own actions) against those dimensions. Though not a box-checking exercise, the framing offers perspective on American and Colombian strategic and operational approaches in light of commonly understood smart power precepts, and proves a useful tool for evaluating the extent and effectiveness of American and, as the analysis makes clear, *Colombian* smart power strategies and approaches during the Plan Colombia period.[1]

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[1]To clarify, Plan Colombia (2000-2008) was the term for the United States and Colombia's overarching multi-year strategy to assist Colombia in which the Colombian government generated its own

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As background, the monograph reviews major policy papers and recent scholarly analyses on smart power. Since Nye's smart power introduction, the national security and foreign policy communities have debated smart power as a preferred way of engaging in foreign and national security affairs, the concept garnering greater acceptance and traction since its introduction circa 2004. The media has covered the subject at length, scholars have written hundreds of articles on the subject, and dozens of high-level conferences have culminated in policy recommendations, lessons learned, and smart power "ways forward." This monograph will highlight key aspects from these and other treatments. The paper will draw, in particular, from the Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) 2007 *Smart Power Commission Report*, a report which furnishes context and rationale and brings to light the extent to which smart power thought and policy proposals have become part of the national security and foreign policy lexicon.

But missing from most if not all treatments of smart power is a focus on its implementation, that is, operationalizing it, in a specific setting. Discussions of smart power tend to be anecdotal, with stand-alone illustrations, rather than comprehensive and integrated country case studies. The case of Colombia and US foreign and national security engagement there is an exception and provides an opportunity to understand and evaluate the ostensible application of smart power. The country's recent past, from 1999 to the present, is frequently cited as evidence of how the United States has applied smart power over a decade-long period to achieve American foreign policy and national security goals and end states resulting in significant benefits to

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complementary strategies, among these: Democratic Security (2003-2007) and the National Consolidation Plan (2007-2010). These, as well as the United States' follow-on strategy to Plan Colombia, the Colombian Strategic Development Initiative (2008 to present) remained basically the same in terms of goals and end states. The strategies are generally referred to simply as Plan Colombia.

Colombia and the Colombian people, and effectively bringing the country "back from the brink."[2]

Moreover, Colombia is important to the United States. It is one of this country's best allies in

Latin America, a longstanding democracy with which the US has close economic and strategic

bilateral ties. It is a valuable economic market, a significant trade partner, and home to over $4

billion in foreign direct investment from the United States. Colombia is the fourth largest country

in South America, approximately the same size as France, Spain, and Portugal combined with a

population of almost 48 million people. It is rich in minerals and energy resources, the world's

leading producer of emeralds, and South America's second largest producer of gold and only

producer of platinum. Colombia also boasts the largest coal reserves, second largest oil, and third

largest gas reserves in South America. This bounty of natural resources has established Colombia

as a top tier international destination for exploration, mining, and investment activity.[3] Its location

in northern South America bordered by Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and Venezuela makes it the

gateway to Latin America and the lynch pin to the Andean region.[4] This means that the security

of the Andean region and that of the United States are inextricably tied to the stability and well-

being of interdependent hemispheric communities.

But Colombia is also a country with serious problems: a history of violence, drug

trafficking, poverty, corruption, insecurity, and weak governance. It has experienced instability

and armed conflict for over 50 years. In the late 1990s, Colombia had deteriorated to the point of

becoming a failed state with massive spillover effects of unrest and narco-trafficking in all of its

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[2]Peter DeShazo, et. al., *Back from the Brink: Evaluating Progress in Colombia, 1999-2007,* Center for Strategic and International Studies Report (Washington, DC: CSIS, November 2007), http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/071112-backfromthebrink-web.pdf (accessed December 2, 2013), 1-68.

[3]CUORO Resource Corporation, "Overview," httpi//www.cuoro resources.com/about-Colombia/overview (accessed January 3, 2014).

[4]Otto J. Reich, "The Crucial Battle for Colombia," *Washington Times*, July 19, 2002, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/jul/19/20020719-034400-7865r/ (accessed December 12, 2013).

neighboring countries. Such threats, especially drug trafficking, have produced and continue to produce detrimental social consequences that undermine the stability and security of all the countries in the Western Hemisphere, including the United States.[5]

Thus, the focus of this monograph: employment of smart power in a single-country context, Colombia, between 1999 and 2010 under Plan Colombia.[6]

Research on Colombia and its "1999 to 2010 period" drew from diverse sources: US government publications including, *inter alia*, US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Department of State (State), the Department of Defense (Defense), the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and the US Government Accountability Office (GAO). Research also utilized non-governmental studies such as think tanks, universities, media accounts, speeches, books, and the works of policy analysts, social scientists, and authorities in development. The author's literature review reveals a tone and substantive content that places Colombia generally in the success column of recent American foreign policy engagement, though not usually citing smart power's role. But as this paper will show, at the very least, elements of smart power were at work: this research, as well as direct field experience,[7] shows that smart power characterized the United States' engagement with Colombia during the 1999 to 2010 period. The monograph highlights both broad and specific instances of US smart power

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[5]Max G. Manwaring, *U.S. Security Policy in the Western Hemisphere: Why Colombia, Why Now, and What Is To Be Done?* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2001), 7.

[6]During the Andrés Pastrana presidency (1998-2002), the United States responded to the Colombian government's request for international support for Plan Colombia by providing substantial assistance designed to increase Colombia's counter-narcotics' capabilities, to expand and consolidate government presence, and to improve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable Colombians by providing sustainable social and economic opportunities, protecting human rights, strengthening the rule of law, and making governance more transparent, participatory and accountable (see: www.bogotá.usembassy/plancolombia).

[7]The author complemented the literature review with fieldwork in Colombia as a foreign service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development where between 2010 and 2012 the author served as Director of the Internally Displaced Persons Directorate in the U.S. Embassy, Bogotá, Colombia.

implementation in Colombia and discusses how the United States assisted Colombia and, as indicated, how Colombia itself took the lead in confronting complex armed conflict with smart power strategic and operational approaches.

Why Colombia? In the words of Retired General Barry McCaffrey, former Director of the White House Office of National Drug Center Policy, "We should support Colombia, not only because they are a traditional ally and an important economic partner, but because it's in our absolute best interest."[8]

But first, what follows is a fuller discussion of the powers themselves.

THE POWERS THAT BE

Hard power is the wielding of military and economic force to influence the behavior of other political bodies.[9] Hard power is aggressive, punishing, and most effective when imposed by one political body upon another of lesser military or economic power. Hard power is the capacity "to coerce another to act in ways in which that entity would not have acted otherwise."[10]

When one thinks of hard power used on an international scale, one thinks of force and strength and might, and not surprisingly, one thinks first of military power. Moreover, one thinks of the United States and its capacity to project force globally.

But hard power and the US military are not necessarily synonymous, and as this paper will show, the US military is not routinely dispensing hard power. Nor is hard power the military default response to any and every international conflict. Policy measures such as economic

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[8]Bob Levey, "Q&A with Barry McCaffrey," Levey Live, July 20, 1999, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/zforum/99/levey/bob0720.htm (accessed December 20, 1999).

[9]Daryl Copeland, "Hard Power vs. Soft Power," The Mark, February 2, 2010, http://pioneers.themarknews.com/articles/895-hard-power-vs-soft-power/#.UuyPbih8vdk (accessed September 20, 2013).

[10]Ernest Wilson, "Hard Power, Soft Power, Smart Power," *The American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 616, no 1 (March 2008): 110-124.

sanctions and mere threats to use military action or implement economic sanctions are part of the hard power picture.

The United States demonstrated a hard power military policy most recently in regard to the Iraq War, the Afghanistan War, and the continued war on Al-Qaeda. The attack on Iraq in 2003 was based on the concern for Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. By referring to the "War on Terrorism," the Bush administration used military hard power to overthrow Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and to deal with the war that followed. But hard power had its price. The costs were enormous. Critics then and now maintain that the war in Iraq caused the United States to suffer a loss in reputation as an icon for democracy and justice.[11] And, despite the brilliance of generals and superiority of troops and fire power, the Iraq conflict demonstrated an age-old maxim of war: no one can predict how well a war will go or when it will end.

Still, there is a time and place for hard power. Consider the rationale of former US Secretary of State Colin Powell speaking to a group of world figures assembled in Davos in 2009, six years into the war in Iraq. After Secretary Powell's speech, George Carey, former Archbishop of Canterbury, observed that the conference had spent a fair amount of time discussing the difference between hard power and soft power: "Was America," he asked, "in danger of relying too much on hard power?" Secretary Powell answered. "Sometimes you are faced with situations that you can't deal with . . . and there comes a time when soft power, talking with evil, will not work, where, unfortunately, hard power is the only thing that works."[12]

Soft power, on the other hand, in its broadest sense, is human diplomacy, the art of dealing with people in a collegial and effective way to get them to want what you want. On the international stage, soft power employs humanitarian and economic assistance; it is diplomacy

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[11]Rita Ricketts, "Winning the Match Point," *New Zealand International Review* 33, no. 6 (November /December 2008): 7-11.

[12]Colin Powell, "Soft Power and Hard Power" (Speech at World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, January 26, 2009), www.defense.gov/landing/comment.aspx (accessed February 2, 2014).

and dialogue, a search for common ground.[13] Citizens, and those who govern them, often talk

about hard power while forgetting that good will, development assistance, partnership,

diplomacy–in short, soft power–are very powerful forces. Nye writes that as a former national

security and defense official he would be the last person to deny the importance of maintaining

the military's strength: "But power comes in many guises, and soft power is not weakness . . . and

the failure to incorporate it in our national strategy is a mistake."[14] Nye and other smart power

thinkers would contend that the United States has a great store of soft power, ergo influence,

embodied in its culture. At the end of the Cold War America enjoyed towering prestige. It was

seen as owning keys to the good life that everyone wanted. If citizens and leaders of other

countries believe that the United States is a moral society, a disinterested provider of peace and

freedom, and willing to listen to the views of its allies and involve them in decision making, they

may respond to its appeals and be willing to provide intelligence, cooperation, and support.

Smart power, a concept credited to Nye's innovative thinking and writing, as noted

above, first emerged in the national security and foreign policy lexicon in 2003 when Nye began

advancing the argument that the most effective strategies in foreign policy require a mix of hard

and soft power resources.[15] In foreign policy and international security affairs smart power, as

Nye articulated then (and smart power proponents today hold), must be understood as a

combination, or mixture, of hard and soft power, an intelligent blending and application of the

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[13]Colin S. Gray, "Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century" (Strategic Studies Institute Monograph, United States Army War College, April 2011), www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/summary/cfm?q=1059 (accessed December 14, 2013), 1-59.

[14]Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Successful World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), 1-191.

[15]Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Get Smart-Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August), http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65163/joseph-s-nye-jr/get-smart (accessed December 12, 2013).

two.[16] For example, the Center for Strategic and International Studies describes smart power as an approach that "underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to expand American influence and establish legitimacy of American action."[17]

Veteran US diplomat Ambassador Chester Crocker explains the concept similarly: "Smart power involves the strategic use of diplomacy, persuasion, capacity building, and the projection of power and influence, essentially the engagement of both military force and all forms of diplomacy."[18] And in "The Art of Smart Power," then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton writes:

> It is no longer enough to be strong. Great powers also have to be savvy and persuasive. The test of our leadership going forward will be our ability to mobilize disparate people and nations to work together to solve common problems and advance shared values. . . . To do that, we need to expand our foreign policy toolbox, integrate every asset and partner, and fundamentally change the way we do business. I call this approach smart power.[19]

In many respects, the emergence of smart power can be viewed as a response to 9/11 and the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq. Smart power proponents contend the Bush Administration focused its policies on the use of hard power while ignoring soft power and that the almost solitary concentration on hard power damaged the American image abroad.[20] When

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[16]Ibid.

[17]Craig Cohen, Joseph S. Nye Jr., and Richard Armitage, *A Smarter, More Secure America*: *Report of the CSIS Commission on Smart Power* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 6, 2007), 7.

[18]Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Smart Power Speaker Series: Ambassador Chester Crocker," https://csis.org/event/smart-power-speaker-series-ambassador-chester-crocker (accessed December 18, 2013).

[19]Hillary Rodham Clinton, "The Art of Smart Power," *New Statesman*, July 18, 2012, http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/politics/2012/07/hillary-clinton-art-smart-power (accessed November 22, 2013).

[20]Nicholas Burns, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, "The Future of Diplomacy" (Speech, Chautauqua Institution, Chautauqua, NY, August 17, 2013), http://www.you tube.com/watch?v=HMO4ohX_1R4 (accessed January 22, 2014).

the United States acted unilaterally and went to war without the consent of the United Nations,

"the United States endangered its reputation as an icon for democracy and justice, even among its

closest allies."[21] In the words of former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas

Burns: "When 9/11 happened, we came out swinging. The response was two bitter and bloody

wars and a loss in global credibility. . . . You go into a china shop and you need to be careful

when you throw your weight around. . . . Was there a better way to act? A smarter way?"[22] Smart

power advocates contend there was, and is.

In 2004 smart power began to take hold in serious academic studies and public policy

discussions, capturing the attention of leading global thinkers, especially in the United States,

prompting many to broaden their perspectives and to entertain and design smart power

approaches.

RHETORIC TO REALITY, THEORY TO PRACTICE

In 2006, nearly five years after 9/11 and two years after smart power emerged on the

national security scene, the Center for Strategic and International Studies convened a high-level,

bipartisan commission tasked with developing a template for revitalizing America's leadership. In

2007, the commission released its exhaustive report, *A Smarter, More Secure America,* a treatise

on power and how America wields it in the world.[23] The report begins with a diagnosis of

America's waning influence in the global community and makes recommendations as to how the

United States can implement a smart power strategy. The collective view of the commission is

that if America is to remain the preponderant power in world politics, it will have to engage and

re-engage other countries in the sharing of leadership and the achievement of mutual goals. The

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[21]Ibid.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Cohen, Nye, and Armitage, 1-90.

world's only super power cannot go it alone. There is no silver bullet for ensuring effective implementation of a smart power strategy, but success and failure, the commission argues, "will turn on the ability to win new allies and strengthen old ones both in government and civil society."[24] *A Smarter, More Secure America* presents five critical areas on which the United States should focus, each of which is a derivative of smart power and many of which, as this analysis will later cover, were discernible in the case of Colombia: (1) alliances, partnerships, and institutions; (2) global development; (3) public diplomacy; (4) economic integration; and (5) technology and innovation.[25] The commission included foreign policy and national security officials from across the political spectrum, as well as officials connected to the then Bush and future Obama administrations. Thus, it is not surprising that in 2008, smart power began gaining greater traction. Consider, for instance, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in making the case for strengthening America's capacity to integrate soft and hard power: "We must focus our energies beyond the guns and steel of the military . . . we must also focus our energies on the other elements of national power that will be so crucial in the years to come."[26] Gates then called for dramatic increases in spending on the United States' civilian instruments of national security, including diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, economic reconstruction and development.

By 2009, early in President Obama's Administration, smart power became a core principle of the administration's foreign policy strategy. During Secretary of State Clinton's Senate confirmation hearings, she emphasized the policy shift, "We must use what has been called smart power: the full range of tools at our disposal–diplomatic, economic, military,

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[24]Ibid., 10.

[25]Ibid., 1.

[26]Department of Defense, "Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Manhattan, Kansas, Monday, November 26, 2007" (Landon Lecture, Kansas State University), www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199 (accessed August 30, 2103).

political, legal, and cultural–picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation."[27] By 2010, the administration's National Security Strategy was firmly rooted in smart power thinking, the document shifting focus and emphasis to development, diplomacy, cultural, and economic engagement.

Since smart power's emergence less than a decade earlier, the policy discussion surrounding it continues to evolve, the focus now on how the United States operationalizes and integrates soft power with hard power to produce the *smart* power that will address current and future contests. In his book *Bound to Lead*, Nye writes of integrating the strengths of hard and soft powers in a whole-of-government approach.[28] For Nye, such a union will require a sophisticated understanding of how to combine American muscle with the tools of soft power.

The case of Colombia and US foreign and national security engagement there between 1999 and 2010 provides an opportunity to see and understand how the United States blended national muscle with elements of soft power and how Colombia, as the reader will see, brought its own muscular approaches and soft power resources to the equation.

FROM PLAN COLOMBIA TO SMART POWER SUCCESS

Colombia is one of the oldest democracies in Latin America, yet has been plagued by violence lasting nearly fifty years.[29] Colombia's history is one of war, conflict, and bloodshed. Since the early twentieth century, successive decades have brought violence and human suffering.

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[27]U.S. Department of State, "American 'Smart Power:' Diplomacy and Development Are the Vanguard," Fact Sheet, Bureau of Public Affairs, May 4, 2009, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/fs/2009/122579.htm (accessed September 10, 2013).

[28]Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 1-336.

[29]June S. Beittel, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 28, 2012), 3.

Since 1954, an estimated 220,000 Colombians, mostly civilians, have been killed in the conflict.[30]

The roots of Colombia's problems run wide and deep and drive illicit drug cultivation,

insurgency, endemic violence, narco-trafficking, and trans-national crime. Drugs in particular

have perpetuated Colombia's conflict, providing earnings to left- and right-wing armed groups.[31]

Limited or no government presence in large parts of the country, and pervasive corruption,

reaching state capture levels, have challenged the Colombian polity. Added to this, Colombia has

never been able to control its borders. Colby Martin, writing for Stratfor, describes the country's

geography (see map, page 14) and its ramifications:

> The Magdalena River Valley represents the heart of the country, where– along with cities
> of Bogotá, Medellin, and Cali– most of the country's population lives. It is isolated from
> the rest of the country by Andes mountain ranges on either side. Outside the heartland is
> a combination of jungles, mountains and plains, largely uninhabited with limited
> infrastructure development. . . . Even with U.S military aid, the logistical challenges
> involved in projecting power into Colombia's hinterlands make extended deployments
> unsustainable. Military operations outside the core have never been able to establish the
> security conditions needed to permit effective law enforcement on a large scale or for a
> significant period of time. The Colombian state is thus largely absent from the
> hinterlands, and the economic inequality in these regions is severe, giving rise to criminal
> organizations and insurgent groups.[32]

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[30]Aljazeera, "Report Says 220,000 Died in Colombia Conflict," Aljazeera.com, July 25, 2013, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2013/07/201372511122146399.html (accessed January 15, 2014).

[31]Stephanie Hanson, "FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas," *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 19, 2009, http://www.cfr.org/colombia/farc-eln-colombias-left-wing-guerrillas/p9272#p4n (accessed January 1, 2014).

[32]Colby Martin, "Colombia's New Counterinsurgency Plan," *Stratfor*, March 29, 2010, http://www.openbriefing.org/issuedesks/politicalviolence/espadadehonor (accessed May 7, 2014).

Figure 1.   Colombia Map

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Not surprisingly, the l960s saw the rise of two main leftist groups, the Revolutionary

Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), both of which

have wreaked havoc and lawlessness on the population, kidnapping for ransom, committing

human rights violations, and carrying out terrorist acts.[33] The early eighties saw the emergence of

the M-19, a self-styled urban guerrilla group, another faction with which the Colombian

government had to deal, as well as the notorious "Cali," "Medellin," and "Cartagena" cartels.

And throughout the 1980s, Colombia's conservative elites organized the United Self-Defense

Forces of Colombia (AUC), a right-wing umbrella group claiming to take up arms in "self-

defense," though it was nothing more than a violent drug cartel and terrorist organization.[34] By

the late 1990s, Colombia found itself careening toward collapse:

> Together with the Colombian armed forces and their burgeoning paramilitary allies the
> FARC helped plunge the country into new depths of barbarism as peace negotiations got
> underway in 1999. They took kidnapping, extortion, and political murder to hitherto
> unimaginable levels, eroding what minimal political legitimacy they had once enjoyed in
> the cities, and clearing the path to power for the authoritarian right. The paramilitaries,
> meanwhile, solidified ties to official politics and the highest rungs of the cocaine
> commodity circuit, and carried out most of the country's massacres; paramilitary
> massacres increased from 286 in 1997 to 407 in 1999.[35]

But a turning point, two turning points, occurred between 1999 and 2002. First, in 1999 when

Colombia's then-president Andrés Pastrana embraced Plan Colombia, the jointly-proposed

Colombia-United States comprehensive strategy to address the country's longstanding,

overwhelming, and mutually reinforcing problems.[36] Under Plan Colombia, Pastrana asked the

United States for significantly stepped-up military and economic aid to combat FARC insurgents,

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[33]Martin.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Forrest Hylton, "Plan Colombia: The Measure of Success," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 17, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2010), http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/60576434/plan-colombia-measure-success (accessed December 15, 2013), 10.

[36]Beittel, 31.

drug trafficking, poverty, human rights violations, and the country's lack of development.

Responding, the Clinton Administration moved through Congress a $1.3 billion emergency

supplemental aid package, a blueprint for "peace, prosperity, and the strengthening of the state"

drawn up with the Pastrana government. What Pastrana called a Marshall Plan[37] for his country is

described here by CRS:

> Plan Colombia was developed by President Pastrana (1998-2002) as a strategy to end the
> country's 40-year-old armed conflict, eliminate drug trafficking, and promote
> development. The initial plan was a $7.5 billion six-year plan, with Colombia providing
> $4 billion of the funding and requesting $3.5 billion from the international community.[38]

In practical terms, "peace, prosperity, and state strengthening" would translate quickly into

massive hard-side (and some soft-side) measures, strengthening the Colombian government's

capacity to pursue military aims but also, though to lesser degrees, providing development and

economic assistance to address the conflict's underlying causes. Initial aid would be followed

year after year with annual billion dollar assistance packages continuing for over a decade. Under

Plan Colombia, President Pastrana continued to pursue a negotiated solution to Colombia's

conflict, holding talks with the FARC and, in a gesture of good faith, maintaining the "*Zona de

Despeje*," a 42,000-square-kilometer de-militarized zone from which the FARC could operate

freely while peace talks proceeded. Ultimately, Pastrana's duel-track approach, i.e., war

continuation amidst negotiations, foundered and the conflict continued.[39]

A second turning point came in 2002 when Colombians elected Álvaro Uribe. Like his

predecessor, Uribe embraced Plan Colombia, but also sought to transform the war. The new

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[37]Uri Friedman, "A Brief History of Plan Colombia," *Foreign Policy*, November 1, 2011, http://www.npr.org/2011/11/01/141900629/foreign-policy-abief-history-of-plan-colombia (accessed August 24, 2013).

[38]Beittel, 31.

[39]Johanna Mendelson Forman, Peter Deshazo, and Phillip McLean, "Countering Threats to Security and Stability in A Failing State," September 2009, http://csis.org/publication/countering-threats-security-and-stability-failing-state (accessed March 20, 2014),12.

president, elected on a "no more compromises"[40] pledge, immediately organized his

administration around a new comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy, drawing heavily on

Plan Colombia's hard-side resources.[41] Over the next five years, under the Uribe government's

new Democratic Security policy–an integrated counter-insurgency/counter-narcotics strategy–

Colombians saw more robust operations against FARC and ELN insurgents, stepped-up counter-

narcotics and counter-trafficking efforts, and the first real steps to deal with the paramilitary

problem. The Colombian army began decimating the FARC and ELN, pushing them out of long-

held strongholds and into the country's confined jungles. Simultaneously, the Uribe government

managed the demobilization and disarmament of roughly 31,000 AUC paramilitaries.[42] Improved

Colombian special forces capabilities enabled several high-profile and successful raids against

FARC encampments, the killing of top FARC commanders,[43] and in 2008 the spectacular rescue

of 15 hostages long held by FARC rebels (including three US defense contractors and a former

Colombian presidential candidate). All told, Colombia's newly strengthened army, in no small

measure a result of US military assistance, devastated insurgent ranks, reducing the FARC from

20,000 strong to less than half that number in just five years[44] and the ELN from about 5,000

combatants to an estimated 2,000.[45] By 2008, two years into Uribe's second term, Colombia's

security situation had considerably improved. A 2008 Council on Foreign Relations report:

> The state is now present in many regions previously controlled by illegal armed groups,
> reestablishing elected governments, building and rebuilding public infrastructure, and

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[40]Thomas Ricks, "Colombia's Neglected Success Story," *Foreign Policy*. July 29, 2010,
http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/07/29/colombias_neglected_success_story (accessed March 20,
2014).

[41]Beittel, 4.

[42]Ibid., 4-5.

[43]Ibid., 5.

[44]Ibid., 16.

[45]Ibid., 18.

affirming the rule of law. . . . These substantial improvements are due to concerted efforts by the Colombian government, with assistance from the United States through Plan Colombia. Colombia still has very serious security problems . . . but important progress has been made.[46]

Versus this assessment of Colombia's late 1990s:

By 1999, Colombia was a country already in deep trouble–its murder, kidnapping, and extortion rates were among the highest in the world; travel and tourism were unsafe. The resultant insecurity had pushed the Colombian economy into recession, and unemployment was moving above 15 percent. The "brain drain" and capital flight which followed took a heavy toll on the country's stability. On the military side, whole battalions of the Colombian army were being decimated in open combat. The military was demoralized and, despite some very talented leadership, headed in the wrong direction. Meanwhile, right-wing illegal armed groups were committing massacres and assassinations, with the same intensity that the FARC was, and very powerful international trafficking organizations, such as the Cali Cartel, penetrated and corrupted many government institutions and contributed to the overall climate of lawlessness.[47]

Although popular and highly regarded, Uribe declined a third term. In 2010 Colombians elected Juan Manuel Santos, Uribe's former Defense Minister. Under President Santos, Colombia still faced significant challenges. But a decade of state and security consolidation, driven largely by hard power and backed by US assistance had begun to pull the country "back from the brink." Senior US national security officials were now presenting Colombia as evidence of effective American foreign policy achievement. In 2009, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen: "I think many of us from all over the world can learn from what has happened with respect to the very successful developments of Plan Colombia."[48] And fast forwarding to 2013, many who had originally advocated for Plan Colombia were by then making

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[46]Charlene Barshefshy, James T. Hill, and Shannon K. O'Neil. *U.S.-Latin America Relations: New Directions for a New Reality* ([New York]: Council on Foreign Relations Press, May 2008), http://www.cfr.org/publication/16279/uslatin_america_relations.html (accessed January 28, 2014).

[47]Mark Coomer, "Drug Traffickers, Insurgents and Safe Havens–Lessons Learned from Plan Colombia," Domestic Preparedness, February 15, 2012, http://www.domesticpreparedness.com/Commentary/Viewpoint/Drug_Traffickers,_Insurgents_&_Safe_Havens_-_Lessons_Learned_from_Plan_Colombia/ (accessed November 15, 2013).

[48]Jim Garamone, "Lessons of Colombia Can Be Applied Elsewhere, Mullen says," *American Armed Services Press*, http//www.defense.gov/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=5f3360 (accessed September 22, 2013).

its case for success story and casting that narrative in a smart power context. For instance, in

Senate Foreign Relations Committee testimony in 2013, William Lane, President of the US

Global Leadership Campaign reflected on the decade:

> The story of Colombia, which has endured a narcotics-funded insurgency for decades, provides an excellent example of 'smart power' in action. . . . In 1999, the U.S and Colombia began a multi-faceted partnership called "Plan Colombia" involving security, developmental, and governance assistance. . . . Back then, the country was engulfed in drug-related violence and lawlessness. Since then, substantial improvements in the equipping, training and professionalism of Colombian security forces led to a dramatic decrease in violence, and the drug lords and their associated guerrilla groups effectively lost control of the countryside they had dominated for so long.[49]

Also in 2013, a before and after picture of Colombia from Supreme Allied Commander Europe

Admiral James Stravidis:

> Colombia ten to fifteen years ago was a lot like Afghanistan is today, but through the application of smart power, today we have productive negotiations ongoing between the main Colombian rebel faction, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the government of Colombia. . . . I don't think anyone who would look at Colombia today and say that it is failing. This positive outcome is an example of the effective application of smart power – it is succeeding.[50]

And though not invoking smart power, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and current

Secretary of State John Kerry have also cited Colombia as success story.[51]

But do such "smart power" characterizations hold true? Can one really point to Colombia

as a *smart power* achievement? And by what criteria? To answer that question, the following

analysis, as stated earlier, borrows smart power dimensions and tenets that smart power thinkers

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[49]U.S. Senate, Testimony for William Lane before U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 2013, http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Lane_Testimony.pdf (accessed March 20, 2014), 3.

[50]Oliver Barrett, "Talking 'Smart Power' with Admiral Stavridis," *U.S. News Opinion*, July 25, 2013, http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/world-report/2013/07/25/recently-retired-nato-commander-james-stavridis-on-conflict-resolution (accessed November 4, 2013).

[51]U.S. Department of State, "Colombia Is World-Class Success Story, Kerry Says," Home page, http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/article/2013/08/20130813280544.html#axzz2s6kphRww (accessed October 17, 2013).

have previously used, and then compares US engagement with Colombia during the 1999-to-2010 period against those dimensions.

FOUR SMART POWER DIMENSIONS IN COLOMBIA

First, smart power forges partnerships, seeks alliances and strengthens host-country ownership. Partnerships, alliances, host-country ownership, and efforts to strengthen these, are crucial smart power precepts, and fundamental to its success: "An essential guiding principle to anyone working in the smart power domain is that organizations must understand that they are not doing things *for* people; they are doing things *with* people."[52]

The United States and Colombia's actions to strengthen relations, build partnerships, and foster host-country ownership manifested themselves at various intervals and on many levels throughout the decade. Beginning in 1999 with Plan Colombia's initiation, the presence of host-country ownership already was evident and by most accounts quite strong. Officials from both governments were actively engaged from day one in drawing up Plan Colombia's strategic and operational components, and demonstrating commitment to President Pastrana's "Marshall Plan." As early as 1999, with Plan Colombia legislation still moving through Congress, State's policy planning staff began joint, interagency planning sessions with senior Colombian military and civilian officials.[53] Officials from State and other foreign affairs agencies worked side by side with Colombian counterparts providing technical and strategic support, with the Colombians embracing US-modeled combined campaign planning constructs. "Plan Colombia," writes Mark Coomer, a veteran national security professional and former member of the National Counterterrorism Center, "envisioned a cooperative assistance program supporting a Colombian-

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[52]CACI International Inc. and the U.S. Naval Institute, "Dealing with Today's Asymmetric Threat to U.S. and Global Security, Symposium Three: Employing Smart Power," March 24, 2009, http://asymmetricthreat.net/docs/asymmetric_threat_3_paper.pdf (accessed September 2, 2013), 20.

[53]Coomer.

led effort."[54] Coomer writes: "US State Department officials led an interagency planning team to Bogotá and, over a period of many months, met with members of the Colombian interagency team to support the campaign planning efforts of the two nations."[55] In this way, early on the United States began gauging Colombian political will and commitment (smart power intangibles) required to build partnerships and undertake multifaceted security/development/counter-narcotics operations.

The sheer size and scope of US involvement in Colombia, the number of agencies, the multiple lines-of-operations, and the billions of dollars meant partnerships and alliances were essential to getting things done. This required joint and interagency planning, partnering, and implementation not only for those activities in hard power's security/counter-narcotics/kinetic domains, but also along soft power's development/diplomacy/governance spectrum. Thus, officials from State, USAID, the Department of Justice, and Defense fostered diplomatic, development, and security partnerships with Colombian counterpart agencies: the Federal Bureau of Investigation partnering with Colombian law enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration with Colombian counter-narcotics entities, elements of the US military (US Southern Command and Joint Interagency Task Force–South) lashing up with Colombian military, police, and security agencies, and the USAID Mission in country partnering with Colombian ministries of health, agriculture, justice, and the government's social service institutions. And where development in particular was concerned, soft power partnerships extended well beyond Colombia's government. As US Embassy Bogotá's development and governance portfolios expanded, State, Justice, and USAID's outreach to Colombian non-governmental organizations, civil society, local communities, municipalities, and human rights

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[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

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groups proved crucial to expanding presence and influence, and later in the decade even included a number of public-private partnerships.

As to war ownership, early in President Uribe's first term, and quite apart from Washington, the new president began reframing the Colombian government's central challenge: the need to bring the Colombian military into a political relationship with the rest of the government and for the government, and not just the generals, to assume ownership of the conflict.[56] Uribe, by sheer force of will and political acumen, reframed the operational environment, taking the security/narco-trafficking problem out of a solely military domain and setting it squarely in a whole-of-government/political context, one that would mean building alliances and relationships among the country's political-military-civil institutional establishment. By 2003, this undertaking would culminate in the Uribe Administration's Democratic Security policy, a whole-of-government counterinsurgency strategy, a *Colombian* whole-of-government strategy, defining the country's strategic and operational approaches, and in many ways shaping the United States' own approaches to assistance going forward.

The depth of host-country commitment would remain steadfast from Colombian administration to administration and president to president, allowing joint and interagency consensus from Washington and Bogotá to become Plan Colombia mainstays. When the government of Colombia announced its follow-on strategy to Democratic Security, it pledged continuity of financial resources and multiyear commitments, as this 2008 GAO report described: "In January 2007, the government of Colombia announced a 6-year follow-on strategy [National Consolidation]. This new strategy includes the same three broad objectives as Plan Colombia. The government of Colombia has pledged to provide approximately $44 billion for [National

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[56]Ibid.

Consolidation]." [57] And the US followed suit, pledging "$4 billion in US support for [National Consolidation] for fiscal years 2007 through 2013."[58]

A further indication of Colombia's own soft power role in advancing host-country ownership would emerge later (circa 2010) as the US government began "turning over operational and financial responsibility for Plan Colombia programs to the Colombians themselves in a process of nationalization."[59] Here, smart power proponents would argue that nationalization was a process set in motion years earlier.[60] Early and ongoing dialogue and government-to-government engagement (institutional and personal) provided both the United States and Colombia a process for developing mutually agreed upon objectives up front, and then determining the pace and criteria for transitioning programs to full Colombian ownership.

Second, smart power employs a full range of options and utilizes all instruments of national power. Whether Plan Colombia employed a full range of options and utilized all instruments of national power in a balanced way *at any one time* in confronting Colombia's complex security, social, and institutional challenges remains open to discussion. But in reviewing the Plan Colombia decade and US engagement there as a whole, over time one can see evidence of this smart power dimension. Throughout the decade, both Colombia and the United States exercised various forms of power, both utilized a wide-range of tools, resources, and

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[57]U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Plan Colombia: Drug Reduction Goals Were Not Fully Met, but Security Has Improved; U.S. Agencies Need More Detailed Plans for Reducing Assistance*, Report to the Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, October 2008, http://www.gao.gov/assets/290/282511.pdf (accessed November 12, 2013), 12.

[58]Ibid., 12.

[59]Beittel, 32.

[60]According to the 2008 GAO report: "Justice and USAID expect that it will take years to create the conditions and partnerships needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of programs and projects initiated with U.S. funding, however, both agencies have begun the process of nationalizing some of their project activities."

nationals assets, and both projected hard and soft power, in tandem, in parallel, and sequentially, to achieve strategic aims.

To be sure, in Plan Colombia's early years US and Colombian policy makers prioritized hard power objectives, turning necessarily to hard power measures. Building on its predecessor's military and security sector reforms, the Uribe government would add "up to 100,000 new military and police forces during the 2002-08 period."[61] As described earlier, having reframed its strategy early on (in 2002), the Uribe government moved quickly to operationalize the strategy's core components. Between 2000 and 2008, heavy hard-power, counterinsurgency and kinetic operations, were the strategy's preferred instruments of force projection. Colombian security forces would conduct "clear, hold, and consolidate" operations throughout large swaths of Colombian territory, directing these at insurgent-controlled (or otherwise ungoverned) areas, clearing them of FARC, then re-establishing security and state presence.[62]

And apart from kinetic operations, yet remaining in the hard power domain, robust extradition programs that took effect after Plan Colombia's launch continued apace under the Uribe government: cooperation between Colombian law enforcement and the US Drug Enforcement Administration would result, over a five-year period, in the capture and extradition of record numbers of narco-criminals and narco-terrorists.

But nuanced hard power/soft power blends were also at work: "Upon taking office," writes CRS, "President Uribe announced that aerial [coca] eradication, *along with alternative crop development*,[63] would form a significant basis of the government's efforts to reduce cocaine

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[61]Andreas E. Feldmann, "Measuring the Colombian 'Success' Story," *Revista de Ciencia Politica* 32, no. 3 (2012): 747.

[62]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 13.

[63]Emphasis added.

production."[64] Present too was the softer power of negotiations and dialogue, that is, smart power's "talking to one's enemies" from a position of hard power backing: "During President Uribe's first term (2002-06), he took a hardline approach to negotiations with illegal armed groups, declaring that the government would only negotiate with those groups willing to give up terrorism and agree to a ceasefire and demobilization, an approach that led ultimately to a 2003 agreement in which the AUC agreed to a full demobilization of its members by 2005."[65]

Democratic Security in the Uribe Administration and all that it encompassed –its reliance on hard power, its selective soft power–suited United States preferences at a time when US government resources were primed for hard power solutions. From the outset, the United States' support to Colombia (direct support to the Pastrana and Uribe governments and specifically to Democratic Security between 2000 and 2008) was vast and wide-ranging. In assessing Plan Colombia, a 2008 GAO report describes the breadth and depth of US government hard power resources, tools, and assets provided to the Colombian military and police counter-narcotics units in support of security/military objectives. It included, *inter alia*: (1) the Department of State and Department of Defense's assistance of "over $844 million to help expand and maintain an Army Aviation Brigade"[66] including three fleets of helicopters (several dozen US aircraft including 17 UH-1Ns, 22 UH-IIs, and 13 UH-60L Blackhawks, and other US and Russian aircraft) thus enabling the rapid deployment of Colombian combat troops "to the point of attack;"[67] (2) the Department of State and Department of Defense's provision of "over $104 million to advise, train, and equip Colombian ground forces"[68] including "creation of an Army Counternarcotics

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[64]Beittel, 32.

[65]Ibid., 4.

[66]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 27-48.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid.

Brigade, Army mobile units, and a Joint Special Operations Command"[69] including training and

equipping (e.g., intelligence, logistics, communications support, vehicles, and infrastructure) for

joint special forces units.[70] "This assistance" writes the GAO report "facilitated the establishment

of a Joint Special Forces Command made up of a commando unit, an urban hostage rescue unit,

and a Colombian Marine special forces unit."[71] (3) the Department of State and Department of

Defense's assistance of over $115 million "to help Colombia implement phase one of its

infrastructure security strategy, designed to protect the first 110 miles of the nearly 500 mile-long

Caño Limón-Coveñas oil pipeline from terrorist attacks;"[72] (4) the Department of State's

provision of "over $62 million in assistance to enable the Colombian Air Force to implement the

Air Bridge Denial (ABD) program, which is designed to improve the Colombian government's

capacity to stop drug trafficking in Colombian airspace."[73] This included providing the

Colombian air force with "seven surveillance aircraft, which monitor Colombian airspace for

suspicious traffic, infrastructure support at four ABD bases located across Colombia, contract

aviation maintenance support, training, ground and air safety monitors, and funding for spare

parts and fuel."[74] (5) the Department of State's provision of "over $458 million to support the

Colombian National Police Aerial Eradication Program, which is designed to spray coca and

opium poppy;"[75] (6) the Department of State's provision of "over $463 million to help expand

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[69]Ibid., 27-48.

[70]Ibid.

[71] Ibid.

[72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid.

[74]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 27-48. According to the 2008 GAO report: "The
program also utilizes a network of U.S. detection resources including five in-country radars, over-the-
horizon radars located outside Colombia, and airborne radar systems."

[75]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 27-48. According to the 2008 GAO report: "The Aerial
Eradication Program consists of U.S.-owned spray aircraft and helicopters, as well as contractor support to

and sustain the Police Air Service"[76] enabling "air mobility support for a range of [Colombian] national police functions including aerial and manual eradication efforts that require gunship and search and rescue support for the spray planes, as well as airlift support for the manual eradication teams and associated security personnel;"[77] (7) the Department of State's provision of "over \$153 million to strengthen the [Colombian] national police's efforts to interdict illicit drug trafficking."[78] In 2007, State "focused most of its assistance on equipping and training [national police commando units], but also provided assistance for maritime, airport, and road interdiction programs;"[79] (8) the Department of State's provision of "training, weapons, ammunition, night vision goggles, metal detectors, radios, vehicles, and other items including some limited support for permanent police stations"[80] in support of "President Uribe's goal of re-establishing a state presence in each of the country's 1,099 municipalities."[81]

For nearly a decade, these components would form the bulk of US government assistance. As described earlier, there is a time and place for hard power and this was Colombia's (and the United States') hard power moment. But soft side assistance during this period, such as development and other non-military aid, was not insignificant. From 2000 to 2008, State and USAID assistance reached \$1.3 billion and included: (1) USAID's alternative development

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help fly, maintain, and operate these assets at forward operating locations throughout Colombia (aircraft included 13 armored AT-802 spray aircraft; 13 UH-1N helicopters used as gunships or search and rescue aircraft; four C-27 transport aircraft used to ferry supplies and personnel to and from the various spray bases; and two reconnaissance aircraft used to find and identify coca cultivation, and plan and verify the results of spray missions)."

[76]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 27-48.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid.

assistance of $500 million to "individuals, communities, and the private sector to develop licit crops"[82] as well as assistance to support "social infrastructure activities such as schools and water treatment plants, providing training, technical assistance, and financing of community projects;"[83] (2) USAID and Department of State assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs): "$88 million in short-term, humanitarian assistance to support IDPs and other vulnerable groups (such as Afro-Colombians and indigenous peoples)"[84] and USAID provision of over "$200 million for longer term economic and social assistance . . ."[85] also in support of IDPs and vulnerable groups, including "housing needs and generating employment through job training and business development and . . . institutional strengthening of Colombian government entities and nongovernmental organizations;"[86] (3) USAID's assistance of over $44 million for "monitoring and processing demobilized AUC combatants, the verification mission of the Organization of the American States, reparations and reconciliation for victims of paramilitary violence, and the reintegration of adult and child ex-combatants into Colombian society"[87] and support to "the National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation . . . created to deliver reparations and assistance to victims;"[88] (4) USAID support for democracy activities including provision of "over $150 million to support the rule of law in Colombia through human rights protection, the creation of conflict resolution centers, and training of public defenders"[89] as well as "programs that protect

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[82]Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Ibid.

[88]In 2003, the Colombian government and AUC entered into a peace accord to demobilize.

[89]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 27-48.

union leaders, journalists, mayors, and leaders of civil society organizations. USAID also created and provides assistance to Colombia's Early Warning System, to alert authorities of violent acts committed by illegally armed groups;"[90] And, (5) Department of Justice support for rule of law activities including "over $114 million in fiscal years 2000 through 2007 for programs intended to improve the rule of law in Colombia, primarily for the transition to a new criminal justice system and training and related assistance for investigating human rights crimes."[91]

By 2007, with rebel groups weakened, paramilitaries mostly disbanded, and large parts of the country relatively secure, with a police presence reaching nearly 1,000 Colombian municipalities,[92] Democratic Security would transition to National Consolidation, a phase of Plan Colombia employing hard and soft power instruments in tandem: called "integrated action" and later the National Consolidation Plan (PNC), the strategy combine[d] security, counter-narcotics, and development in a sequenced approach targeting remote, but strategically important, areas where illegal armed groups continue[d] to operate."[93] National Consolidation aimed to cement hard-won security gains with the softer power of development, rule of law, governance, and economic livelihoods; "[the] new strategy" writes CRS, "was intended to consolidate the gains of the Democratic Security policies that were successful in reducing violence in the first term and to consolidate state presence in marginal areas where insurgent activity by illegal armed groups, drug trafficking and violence converged."[94] With Consolidation, the Colombian government shifted emphasis to soft power's focus on citizen needs, particularly state presence, public order,

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[90]Ibid.

[91]Ibid.

[92]Michael Shifter, "Plan Colombia: A Retrospective," Americas Quarterly, http://www.americasquarterly.org/node/3787 (accessed August 15, 2013).

[93]Beittel, 35.

[94]Ibid.

community services, local policing, meeting basic needs, building infrastructure, and strengthening local governance capacity. As the approach shifted, notably, in no small measure a result of US encouragement, Washington's approach shifted with it. In a 2007-08 funding plan, the State outlined its intent to "provide an additional $4 billion in assistance"[95] to support Consolidation: "The plan called for a gradual reduction in assistance to the Colombian military and National Police, an initial increase in funding for nonmilitary assistance programs, followed by relatively constant funding levels for nonmilitary assistance through fiscal year 2013"[96] The US Embassy Bogotá in 2008 would undertake a transition to the Colombian Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI), a strategy more balanced in its soft- and hard-side measures. The new approach supported Consolidation by focusing US government assistance in its prioritized municipalities. State, USAID, and Justice would take on more prominent roles. US government hard power eradication programs were increasingly coupled with soft power development: the USAID Mission, for instance, stepped up programs to "assist farmers of illicit crops, and [provide] assistance with infrastructure and marketing . . . job creation for rural families in coca-growing and conflict-prone areas."[97]

Thus, nearing the end of the decade, the US State Department, reflecting on the strategic shift in a 2009 report, could now describe a more integrated hard power/soft power preference: "US foreign assistance priorities in FY 2009 were increasingly guided by the Colombia Strategic Development Initiative, an interagency USG plan to . . . expand state presence to key priority zones . . . previously controlled by illegal armed groups."[98] Then-Minister of Defense Juan

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[95]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 3.

[96]Ibid.

[97]Beittel, 33.

[98]U.S. Department of State, *Colombia U.S. Foreign Assistance Performance Publication FY 2009*, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/159251.pdf (accessed February 1, 2014), 1-2.

Manual Santo called Consolidation a "strategic leap"[99] forward and Washington described CSDI as a logical progression of Plan Colombia.[100]

Third, smart power is agile, flexible, and adaptable. Skillful programmatic and institutional adjustments are smart power defining attributes and necessary for operating in foreign affairs and international settings. Without question, changes and adjustments will be required. The mix of soft and hard power and its application over time and space will vary as events unfold. In Colombia a key turning point, and clear-cut example of smart power agility, occurred in 2002 when the US Congress granted the Clinton Administration flexibility to use counter-narcotics funds to combat both Colombia's drug trafficking and terrorist problems. The CRS report describes the 2002 change: "The US-Colombian partnership, initially focused on counter-narcotics, shifted in 2002" when "Congress granted the Administration flexibility to use US counterdrug funds for a unified campaign to fight drug trafficking and terrorist organizations."[101] The US government moved past compartmentalizing artificially insurgency, war, and violence on one hand and drug production and trafficking–the activities fuelling them–on the other. No longer would US hard-side resources be tied to drugs, but could also be used to combat the FARC, ELN, and paramilitaries.

Similarly, where soft-side aid was concerned, USAID's Colombia Mission adjusted fairly swiftly year after year to changing needs on the ground. Targeted grants and quick response mechanisms, especially those of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), demonstrated capacity to mobilize development activities and project soft-power assistance into Colombian communities and neighborhoods. For example, operating in hostile environments, OTI Colombia

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[99]Beittel, 35.

[100]U.S. Department of State, *Colombia U.S. Foreign Assistance Performance Publication FY 2009*, 1-2.

[101]Beittel, 31.

implemented community stabilization over a 54-month period from 2007 to 2011 in zones recently recovered from insurgents, the US government provided support for "short-term activities designed to meet immediate needs, such as quick impact projects to establish roads, bridges, health posts and electrification to help communities recover from the impact of conflict and eradication." And other US government assistance ranged from strengthening producer associations, increasing marketing opportunities for licit crops" on the one hand to "technical assistance to Colombian civilian agencies that are working to establish a permanent presence" on the other.[102] The program reached isolated and rural communities to rebuild community cohesion and licit economic activities. Actions of this nature demonstrated to local populations the presence of civilian institutions, provided follow-on assistance in post-kinetic operations, and laid the groundwork for longer-term economic and institutional development. But they also demonstrated a US government soft power capability, "fast, flexible processes and overall catalytic approach" as both the Center for Strategic International Studies and United States Institute for Peace would describe, in post-conflict areas.[103]

Apart from quick response, USAID proved adept at supporting the country's longer-term economic, social, and political reforms even as Colombia's own approaches to reach those reforms changed over time. At each phase in the United States-Colombia assistance relationship, USAID adjusted strategies and revised development portfolios as needed, designing and awarding new programs, guiding implementing partners in new directions, and modifying government bilateral agreements, to suit emerging challenges.

Finally, the size and scope of United States assistance, its expansive reach throughout Colombia's territory, its networks of non-governmental organizations, civil society, and private

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[102]Ibid., 36.

[103]Caroline Hartzell, Robert D. Lamb, Phillip McLean, and Johanna Mendelson Forman with Maria Cristina Olano, *USAID/OTI'S Initial Governance Response Program in Colombia*, http://csis.org/files/publication/110701_Colombia_Evaluation.pdf (accessed January 23, 2014), 5.

sector partners, necessarily required an in-country field presence ranging into the hundreds, exceeding at times the thousand-officer mark. While this translated into increased logistical and security costs and at times imposed operational friction, it also presented a soft power opportunity: diplomatic and development "boots on the ground" allowed face-to-face, real-time feedback for Embassy Bogotá officials as they travelled the country, including into isolated rural communities, to hear directly from program beneficiaries and listen firsthand to local officials on what was working, what was not, and what remedial actions made sense.

Fourth, smart power requires resources, takes time, and values prospective thinking over crisis response, prevention over reaction. Smart power requires time, long-term commitment, and robust financial resources, and though both the United States and Colombia came to the table with an understanding of all three, the United States' actions by 1999 to stave off Colombia (a failing state) from becoming a failed state cannot be seen as an example of US preventative thinking. Colombia's crisis point in 1999 should not have come as a surprise. Although the $7.5 billion six-year assistance package was testament to US concern, it was late in coming. In the author's view, earlier US administrations (that is, pre-Plan Colombia) seemed to take the view that Colombia's situation posed no strategic threat; rather its potential collapse was viewed as "down range," a threat "out there," something less than a clear and present danger. Simply put, prospective, preventative thinking regarding Colombia was missing. By the time Washington and Bogotá turned to Plan Colombia, the country was nearly 40 years into armed conflict. The roots of that conflict–inequality, land concentration, political violence, official corruption, and poverty– had been scarcely addressed or addressed, so ineffectively as to make little difference.

Notwithstanding, once on board, neither Colombia nor the United States viewed the "Colombia failing-state challenge" as an overnight proposition. No evidence suggests policy makers assumed that large infusions of economic aid or swift military intervention would quickly solve the country's four-decade-long armed conflict. Multi-year planning and long-term

forecasting characterized the thinking of all involved, and this included support from successive

US Republican and Democratic administrations and a series of bipartisan American Congresses.

This continuity of resolve proved crucial as foreign aid grew steadily year after year, assuring

Colombia of an enduring American partnership. Moreover, successive US and Colombian

governments, from Clinton to Obama, Pastrana to Santos, understood financial resources as the

sine qua non of any real prospects for Plan Colombia success. A review of US Congressional

appropriations from 2000 to 2012 provides a picture of consistent and significant annual financial

allocations: "from FY 2000 through FY 2012, US funding for Plan Colombia and its follow-on

strategies totaled over $8 billion in State Department and Defense Department programs."[104]

These levels put Colombia perennially near the top of US foreign aid recipients, second only to

Iraq and Afghanistan. Colombia's financial commitment was also well represented. By 1999, the

Colombian government had begun to embrace its social contract, maintaining concerted fiscal

policies, and ensuring its "Plan Colombia institutions" were well-resourced throughout the

decade. In this respect, it is instructive to recall that the Colombian government funded over half

the initial $7.5 billion Plan Colombia aid package, nearly doubled the armed forces' end

strength,[105] and tripled its military budget at a cost of $40 to $50 billion in host-country funds.[106]

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of smart power in Colombia cannot be evaluated today without

considering the country's recent history. It is instructive to recall how Colombia began the decade

and how it emerged eight years later, its trajectory in the late 1990s evoking alarmist tones of a

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[104]Beittel, 36.

[105]U.S. Government Accountability Office, 13.

[106]Adam Isacson, "Don't Call It A Model: On Plan Colombia's Tenth Anniversary, Claims of 'Success' Don't Stand Up to Scrutiny," Just the Facts, July 14, 2010, http://justf.org/notmodel (accessed January 22, 2014).

country "near collapse" and giving no indication of hopeful change to come. Yet by 2008, Colombia evoked very different assessments, a country "on the march," a nation "back from the brink," a Latin America "success story."[107] For Colombians, writes Latin America correspondent Chris Kraul, "the situation is far improved from the late 1990s when a Pentagon study warned that their country could become a narco-state in five years. On the tenth anniversary of the program known as Plan Colombia, the South American nation appears more secure."[108] And while these broadly positive appraisals have now become common, wide-ranging research conducted for this monograph confirms a similarly favorable assessment making data and evidence of Colombia's impressive progress worth revisiting.[109] On conflict and level of violence: an estimated 54,000 guerrillas and paramilitaries have demobilized; drug-related kidnappings are down by 90 percent, homicides by 46 percent, and terrorist attacks by 71 percent. On economic performance: the number of Colombians living in poverty is down from approximately 50 percent in 2002 to 34 percent in 2010; in 2011, Colombia's economic growth rates were close to 5.9, the nation's per capita gross domestic product doubling[110] and the unemployment rate dropping by 25 percent and an only mild 2.5 rate of inflation;[111] foreign investment has "more than doubled in five years from roughly $6.5 billion in 2006 to more than $14 billion in 2011;"[112] on foreign and external relations: in 2011, Colombia, Peru, and Chile opened an integrated stock market seeking

[107]DeShazo, et al.

[108]Chris Kraul, "Billions of U.S. Dollars Later, Colombia Gets the Upper Hand in Battle on Rebels, Drugs," *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 2010, http://articles.latimes.com/2010/sep/26/world/la-fg-plan-colombia-20100926 (accessed February 2, 2014).

[109]Coomer.

[110]ProExport Colombia, "Colombia: A Market of Opportunities," http://www.proexport.com.co/en/FTA-USA-Colombia/colombia-market-opportunities (accessed February 5, 2014).

[111]Pulsa Merica, "Economy: Latin America's Five Fastest-Growing Economies," http://www.pulsamerica.co.uk/2012/12/05/economy-latin-americas-five-fastest-growing-economies/ (accessed February 7, 2014).

[112]Beittel, 3.

to capitalize on surging investor interest in the Andean region; the Santos government has actively pursued and concluded several free trade agreements, including the US-Colombia Free-Trade Agreement, which went into force recently;[113] tensions with Venezuela have eased and more normal economic relations have resumed; on social and post-conflict reforms: the Santos government has increased investments in social reforms, notably land reform, and important post-conflict processes including truth and reconciliation measures, and reparations for conflict victims; historic peace talks have also been underway between the Colombian government and the FARC with the aim of ending nearly 50 years of fighting.[114]

But such positive developments and the temptation to attribute them to smart power risks glossing over facts that must be addressed in considering Plan Colombia. During much of the Plan Colombia period, as the Colombian government fought to pull its country back from the proverbial brink, a darker side to its war prosecution unfolded, an approach deeply flawed in its execution and a Colombian government and political leadership that allowed, at times enabled and justified, what would become the worst manifestations of Plan Colombia. In a retrospective report in 2011, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) described the early years of Plan Colombia as nightmarish for many.[115] Its authors argue, as others have, that US and Colombian policies failed to address key social, human rights, and development issues. The United States' policy, the report contends, over-militarized solutions to Colombia's armed conflict and opted instead to extend government presence with a largely military occupation of territory. And on the counter-narcotics front (the plan's putative original rationale), despite some

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[113]Ibid., 13.

[114]BBC News, "Colombia Agrees FARC Political Participation," News Latin America and Caribbean, November 6, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-24842432 (accessed February 13, 2014).

[115]Lisa Haugaard, Adam Isacson, and Jennifer Johnson, "A Cautionary Tale: Plan Colombia's Lessons for U.S. Policy Toward Mexico and Beyond," http://www.wola.org/publications/acautionary taleplancolombiaslessonsforuspolicytowardmexicoandbeyond (accessed August 19, 2013).

advances, progress overall has been mixed. While some reduction in coca production has

occurred, Colombia is still engaged heavily in the international drug trade and remains a major

source of the world's cocaine production.[116] "Looked at more closely," writes WOLA's Adam

Isacson, "Colombia's security gains are partial, possibly reversible, and weighed down by

'collateral damage.'"[117] The authors are not alone in this view. The position WOLA and others

have taken is not inconsistent with certain aspects of Plan Colombia and the reality of what those

aspects became for many inside and outside the country for a good portion of the decade.[118] Such

concerns have fueled debate in recent years surrounding Colombia, Plan Colombia, and US

policy in Latin America and will continue to do so as long as Colombia is held out as a US

foreign and national security exemplar.[119] Certainly the human rights abuses and humanitarian

crises[120] that continued to unfold in the years of Plan Colombia represented its worst

manifestations, the very conduct smart power thinking should have anticipated and prevented,

and smart power actions eschewed. Smart power proponents, and anyone claiming success in

Colombia, would do well to contemplate what these and others have justifiably characterized as

real and lasting damage done to the country and its institutions in pursuit of security and

counterinsurgency.

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[116]Ibid.

[117]Isacson, "Colombia: Don't Call It A Model."

[118]For instance, writing for the on-line publication *Colombia Politics*, Marc Sales contends: "But while successes in security are undeniable, Plan Colombia will always be tainted by the numerous human rights abuses that were carried out in its name, abuses by the Colombian military, the paramilitary groups, and the politicians with links to the latter. (see: Marcus Sales, "Plan Colombia Years: A Tainted Success?" Colombia Politics, May 19, 2013).

[119]For another excellent, independent, and critical report/evaluation of the Plan Colombia era, see: Adam Isaacson and Abigail Poe, "After Plan Colombia: The Next Phase of U.S. Assistance," International Policy Report, December 2009, justf.org/content/after-plan-colombia (accessed March 20, 2014).

[120]Throughout the 1999 to 2010 period, the total number of Colombia's internally displaced persons (IDPs) population has continued to grow, though by most estimates the year-over-year rate of growth slowing.

Still, it is hard to imagine Colombia surviving the decade had it continued on its path without US assistance of the sort Plan Colombia encompassed. Nor is it inconceivable to envision the scenarios that might have followed a collapse of the Colombian state: an unleashing of human rights atrocities, dramatic increases in ungoverned space, an outbreak of politically motivated violence, and spillover effects across borders, consequences well within the realm of possibility. By most accounts, Colombia is better off today than it was in 1999. To deny this is to deny the improved daily conditions of Colombians who having lived through their country's most violent and war-torn years were by the end of the decade far freer and more secure than at any time in recent history. Moreover, US policy in Colombia never committed to resolving all of Colombia's problems at once, especially where the challenges were as entrenched and complex as Colombia's. A state must first consolidate its territory and establish security for its citizenry before economic development, improved governance, and other reforms can take hold. Under such conditions, security assumes necessarily a more prominent role and must be allocated the resources and time needed to succeed. Only then can other instruments of state power (economic development, social and political reforms, improved governance, and provision of basic services) follow effectively. Thus, "Over time," Coomer writes, "it seems increasingly obvious that Plan Colombia adopted the best strategy for the specific times and circumstances." Indeed, over a decade since the two turning points cited, Colombia and Colombians are benefiting from their government's shift of resources, attention, and focus since consolidation. Too, the US government's oft-cited "80 percent hard-side/20 percent soft-side" ratio is now closer to 50/50.[121]

Also, just as smart power cannot be evaluated fairly without considering Colombia recent past, nor can a policy be judged without making real-world comparisons. A common and critical refrain one hears of Colombia's success is "yes, but it took years to take hold." But so too have

[121]Beittel, 37.

America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, two contests that after eight and 13 years respectively have inflicted enormous human toll and financial costs to the United States, and with dubious gains. Whereas Iraq and Afghanistan required hundreds of thousands of American troops and personnel, the United States' military footprint in Colombia remained lite, never once exceeding the 800-person troop cap; whereas the Iraq and Afghanistan wars resulted in nearly several thousand American lives lost, not a single American soldier has been killed in Colombia's conflict;[122] whereas the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have resulted in over a million service members injured, not a single American soldier has been in injured in Colombia;[123] whereas the costs of the nation's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are now reaching $2 trillion[124] (with some studies showing long-term costs will reach $4 trillion to $6 trillion), Colombia has yet to exceed $10 billion.[125]

But to what extent did smart power contribute to the turnaround? In the author's view, the case for smart power's effectiveness in US foreign policy in Colombia is persuasive. American and Colombian actions, policies, programs, and funding allocations made during this period demonstrate smart power principles and practices at work, smart power concepts informing and shaping US government thinking, decision-making, and conduct throughout much of the decade. The United States and Colombia employed wide-ranging national instruments of power–"all of the tools in the tool box"–and multiple ways and means of driving strategic outcomes. At the

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[122]"Faces of the Fallen," *Washington Post*, http://apps.washingtonpost.com/national/fallen/ (accessed February 7, 2014).

[123]Jamie Reno, "VA Stops Releasing Data on injured Vets As Total Reach Grim Milestone," *International Business Times*, November 1, 2013, http://www.ibtimes.com/va-stops-data-injured-vets-total-reaches-grim-mileston-exclusive-1449584 (accessed February 7, 2014).

[124]National Priorities Project, "Cost of National Security," http://nationalpriorities.org/cost-of/ (accessed February 7, 2014).

[125]Sabir Shah, "U.S. Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq to cost $6 trillion," Global Research, September 20, 2013, http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-wars-in-afghanistan-iraq-to-cost-6-trillin/5350789 (accessed February 7, 2014).

same time, Colombia's "defeat into victory" also illustrates the hard reality of soft power and the truth of smart power. [126] There is no guarantee that smart power alone will achieve every objective. Soft power is not a science and smart power is not a panacea. Merely piling on resources from a country's vast stockpile of capabilities does not constitute smart power's wielding. Smart power is more than putting weapons on targets or throwing people, dollars, and assets at problems. Rather, smart power is the strategic formulation and execution of smart approaches combined with the deft weaving together of all instruments a nation possesses.

While the elements of smart power were present in Colombia, strategy and statecraft, "the holistic use of diplomacy, military capabilities, economic resources, intelligence sources, information systems, and cultural tools by a political entity for strategic purposes," as senior fellow at the Joint Special Operations University Francisco Wong-Diaz reminds us,[127] were crucial difference-makers. Great credit for Plan Colombia's success is due to the diplomats and foreign policy officials who designed and wrote it. The skill and vision of the US State Department's planning teams contributed greatly to its coherence and positive outcome. As Coomer recounts from his own involvement in Plan Colombia, it was State's planning staff that, early in 1999, held technical-level discussions to determine if "bilateral interests were sufficiently aligned to sustain a strategic partnership"[128] and "whether the partner had the capability, political will, and legitimacy required to accomplish a common strategic purpose."[129] State and successive US administrations identified and assessed requirements to accomplish objectives and specific programs and resources necessary to support an integrated, comprehensive strategy. State and

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[126]The term "defeat into victory" is borrowed from British Field Marshall Viscount Slim's World War II memoir *Defeat Into Victory: Battling Japan in Burma and India, 1942-45*.

[127]Franciso Wong-Diaz, *Smart Power and U.S. National Strategy*, JSOU Report 13-3 (MacDill Air Force Base, FL: JSOU Press, 2013), 10.

[128]Coomer.

[129]Ibid.

other US government officials then led an interagency planning team to Bogotá and, as Coomer continues, "over a period of many months met with members of the Colombian interagency team to support the campaign planning efforts of the two nations."[130] Together they determined how the programs would be "stood up, sequenced, and integrated to accomplish the strategic purpose."[131] In Coomer's assessment, "The process and partnership provided a reasoned and cogent strategy, forcefully executed, to address Colombia's interlocking drugs, security, and socioeconomic problems."[132] *This* was the United States' smart power moment in Colombia.

Another important difference-maker was President Uribe and the Colombian government itself. Chair of the Irregular Warfare Department at the National Defense University Thomas Marks, for instance, has written extensively on Uribe and his administration's extraordinary reframing of the problem. "Uribe," he writes, "created a true counterinsurgency plan."[133] Colombia's social, economic, and political ills, the strategy posited, were inextricably linked to citizen security, lack of state presence, and a failure to integrate elements of national power to end these conditions. Uribe's policy of Democratic Security stated:

> Security is not regarded primarily as the security of the State, nor as the security of the citizen without the assistance of the State. Rather, it is the protection of the citizen and democracy by the State with the solidarity and co-operation of the whole of society. . . . This is, in short, a policy for the protection of the population.[134]

Moreover, "Bogotá had primacy in all matters of strategy and operational art . . . the Colombian leadership displayed a greater understanding [than did the United States] not only of their own

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[130]Ibid.

[131] Ibid.

[132]Ibid.

[133]Thomas A. Marks, "Colombia: Learning Institutions Enable Integrated Response," *PRISM* 1, no. 4 (September, 2010): 131.

[134]Presidency of the Republic/Ministry of Defense, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* (Bogotá: Ministry of Defense, 2003), 13-14.

irregular war but also often of the principles of irregular warfare in general throughout the

conflict."[135] It is here that Uribe and the Colombians themselves embodied the thinking described

by US army Colonel Max Manwaring in a 2001 analysis for the US Army War College's

Strategic Studies Institute:

> There is the need to redefine "enemy," "power," and "victory." The enemy is no longer a recognizable military entity or an industrial capability to make traditional war. The enemy now becomes "violence" and the cases of violence. Thus, the purposes of power have changed. Power is not simply "hard" combat fire power directed at a traditional enemy military formation or industrial complex. Power is multi-layered, combining "hard" and "soft" political psychological, moral informational, economic, societal military, police, and civil bureaucratic activities that can be brought to bear appropriately on the causes as well as the perpetrators of violence. And victory is no longer the acknowledged destruction of an enemy's military capability. Victory . . . [is] defined as "sustainable peace." *Plan Colombia* is a case in point.[136]

Redefining the enemy, power, and victory and emerging from the fog of strategic

confusion–*this* was Colombia's smart power moment.

In this author's view, Plan Colombia and the Colombian government's approaches,

herein deemed smart power, have made a positive difference along security, economic, and

political lines and the United States' considerable engagement during the decade played a large

role in making significant contributions to Colombia's own quite impressive strides. In Colombia

today there exists an optimistic belief that things are getting better and will continue to do so. And

they may, as long as political will, creative leadership, and resources are in place to keep

Colombia's "old" problems from coming back. None of them have been vanquished. As

encouraging as this achievement has been, smart power thinking requires a sobering recognition

that an armed victory over the FARC, or even a negotiated settlement, may not end conflict and

violence in Colombia. The country's terrain, severe inequality, history of resurgent war, and on-

going cocaine trade all create the conditions in which Colombia will continue to struggle. Even as

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[135]Marks, 139.

[136]Manwaring.

Colombia contends with its old challenges, it must confront new ones: the emergence of new paramilitaries, organized criminal gangs, and persistent transnational terrorists. Colombia's gains are reversible and could prove transitory. As former Under Secretary of Defense and long-time national security official Fred Iklé has written, every war must end, and war-termination conditions, if not thought through, jeopardize an end to hostilities on favorable terms, thus setting the stage for evolutions of next-generation conflict and violence.[137] Colombia's neighbors to the north are testament to this. Following several historic and hope-filled peace accords in Central America in the 1990s, countries there transitioned to new forms of violence. Life today for many Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hondurans, and increasingly other countries in the region has become unbearable, reaching conditions many have described as far worse than the years of bloody conflict.[138] Thus, Colombia's current peace talks and subsequent transition bear watching. And while these challenges are ultimately up to Colombians to face, now is not the time for US assistance to decline or US engagement to wane. Strategic smart power in time and space requires sustainment *over* time and space. There are other smart power frontiers to be crossed in Colombia. No one knows how long it will take for a smart power strategy in a region or country to mature, nor is it known how long a smart power contest will last once begun. In Colombia, as elsewhere, the United States must stay engaged. Both countries' gains will only prove lasting if strategic leaders evolve in their thinking and also demonstrate patience and persistence–engaging, re-engaging, and reinforcing.

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[137]Fred Iklé, *Every War Must End* (New York: Columbia Classics, 1971).

[138]This assessment is based on the author's own experiences from 2008 to 2009 as USAID's El Salvador Desk Officer and lead officer for the Agency's Merida Initiative. From that vantage point, the author was able to compare Central America today to his time living and growing up in Central America from 1983 to 1985.

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